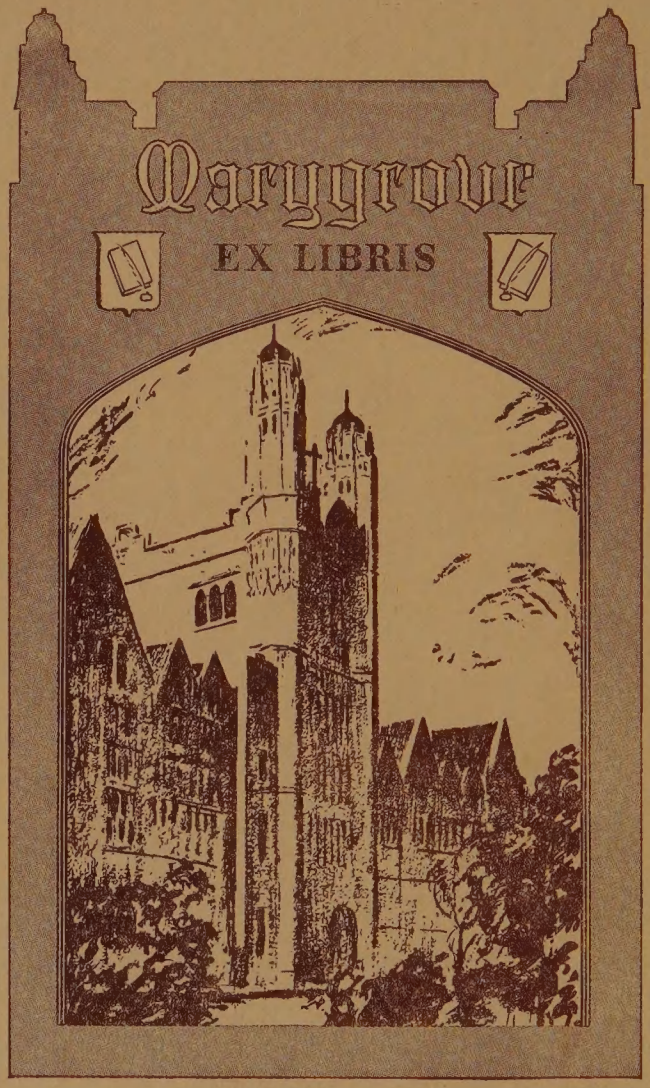
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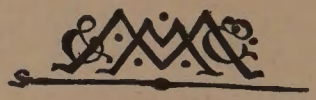
BETHLEHEM



BETHLEHEM

A NATIVITY PLAY

BY LAURENCE HOUSMAN
PERFORMED WITH MUSIC
BY JOSEPH MOORAT UNDER
THE STAGE-DIRECTION OF
EDWARD GORDON CRAIG
DECEMBER MCMII

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ACT I.

CHORUS *enters and speaks before the curtain.*

YE Gentles, that come here to watch our play,
Put, we beseech you, thought of us away!
No standing here have we: in heart we kneel,
With, at our hearts, this prayer,—that ye may feel
How in Love's hands time is a little thing!
And so shall Love to-night your senses bring
Back to the hills of Bethlehem, the fold
Where shepherds watched their sheep, where angels told
Of peace, goodwill to men, in Christ new-born,
By Whom, from Virgin Birth, our flesh goes worn.
Also, if we may guide you, ye shall see
The manger where in great humility
Lieth that Babe, the Maker of us all,
By Mary's side, amid the beasts in stall.
And ye shall see the coming of the Kings,
Led by a star; and Gabriel that brings

Unto St. Joseph, in a dream by night,
Word of King Herod's fear, and counsels flight.
So, lastly, ye shall see them rise and go,
And the place vacant left. Yet ye shall know
That Love remains, and that Faith sees it so.
So, have ye hope! let Time your trust increase!
Hark, I hear music! Christmas comes; 'tis peace!

Pastoral music: a shepherd's voice is heard.

'The world is old, to-night,
The world is old;
The stars around the fold
Do show their light, do show their light.
And so they did, and so,
A thousand years ago,
And so will do, dear love, when you lie cold.'

[*The curtain opens.*

YOUNG SHEPHERD (*sings*).

The world is still, to-night,
The world is still;
The snow on vale and hill
Like wool lies white, like wool lies white.
And so it was, and so,
A thousand years ago,
And so will be, good lads, when we lack will.

WATCHER.

Ay-oh, ay-oh, ay-oh!

1ST SHEPHERD.

There be good fairies up in air to-night:
Come ere a frost so mild with stars so bright?
The wind has shut itself in-door again,
And all the air be saft like a'ter rain.

WATCHER.

Ay-oh, ay-oh, ay-oh!

2ND SHEPHERD (*rising*).

The sheep be quiet; the dogs have nought to do;
The lambs come kind; there haven't been a ewe
Lost, nor a still one born, this moon, there an't:
A thing I can't remember, nor I can't,
Since I've been shepherd:—that's nigh forty year.

3RD SHEPHERD.

Well, well!

4TH SHEPHERD.

What star be that'n out yonder there?
It's been a-coming on, night a'ter night,
This long time back, but never looked so bright
As 'a do now.

WATCHER.

Ay-oh, ay-oh, ay-oh !

4TH SHEPHERD.

D'you think stars have a way
Of coming out like, special, when they got summut
to say ?
I've often wondered how it is they are :
You never seem to get no nearer to a star,—
Walk a'ter 'em a mile they still seem just as far.

3RD SHEPHERD.

'Tis as God made 'em. Like as they were geese,
Go a'ter 'em, and they turns tail and flees ;
Then you go back, and back they come at you !
So as God made 'em's what they got to do.

1ST SHEPHERD.

Aye, I don't doubt the stars lays facts to mind :
There's them as say men's names be marked and
signed,—
Writ in the roof up there, for proof that God's
behind.

WATCHER.

Ay-oh, ay-oh, ay-oh !

5TH SHEPHERD.

You think a star knows what it's all about,
A-blazing for?

1ST SHEPHERD.

I haven't got a doubt
He does! That star—now, don't tell me no more
You think he don't know what he's shining for!
Look at him jerking and working, and a-winking
and a-blinking;—
Well,—that's him thinking.

3RD SHEPHERD.

Well, if he thinks the things God sets him to,
Like we poor men, he got enough to do!

WATCHER.

Ay-oh, ay-oh, ay-oh!

4TH SHEPHERD.

There's old blind Abe a-looking! Don't he seem
As if he saw it?

2ND SHEPHERD.

Aye! he likes to dream
He's won his sight back, tho' it's been twelve
year gone.
Abe, what d'you think you've got your eye upon?

ABEL.

A good sight! aye, and a sight as you can't see
So well as I. The thought just come to me,
While all of you sat talking by my side,
Like to the word the prophet prophesied;—
And while you talked, the thought o' it kep' me dumb:—
Shiloh, thinks I,—will I see Shiloh come?
And all at once these words were in my head,—
What he,—the man whose eyes were open—said
Aforetime, 'I shall see him;—but not now!'
Says he, 'I shall behold him;—but not nigh:
'Out of Jacob there shall come forth a Star,
'And a Sceptre in Israel shall be raised high.'—
So he bare witness of things seen afar.
And that being told so many years ago,
Yet still to come, do surely seem to show
How we be likelier to behold that Star
Than he who only spoke o' it from afar.
And in that day, 'tis told, the dumb shall talk,
The old shall leap, and the lame man shall walk,
And the blind man recover back his sight!

3RD SHEPHERD.

Well, well, it may be so! God will do right.

1ST SHEPHERD.

May we be there to see when that day shows:
What it can do for such as we—God knows!

WATCHER.

Ay-oh! . . .

1ST SHEPHERD.

Why! who be yon fine gentleman in white
Stepping across the sheepfolds to the right?

4TH SHEPHERD.

How comes it that his face be lit so bright?

3RD SHEPHERD.

The blood pricks in my thumbs;
'Tis like a ghost he comes!

Enter GABRIEL.

GABRIEL.

Let nothing you annoy!
Behold, I bring
Good tidings of great joy:
To you a King
This day is born, to you and all mankind.
Even Christ the Lord, to man's estate resigned.

3RD SHEPHERD.

O Lord, O Lord! was ever the like heard tell!

ABEL.

Hold ye your peace, neighbours! he speaks us well.

GABRIEL.

And of that same
Let this be for a sign:
In Bethlehem,
Cradled amid the kine,
A Babe in swaddling-bands ye there shall find.

4TH SHEPHERD.

Have you no fear? oh, Abel, but you're blind!

ABEL.

Peace, and give ear! New light shines in my mind.

GABRIEL.

And as a shepherd he shall feed
His flocks, and in his arms shall bear
The lambs, and like a father fair
The ewes with young shall lead.

Enter ANGELS.

ANGELS.

SEMI-CHORUS.

Glory to God
Who unto man
Peace be to earth!
Christ the new Birth

SEMI-CHORUS.

In the Highest!
Now comes nighest.
Goodwill to all!
Redeems man's fall.

GABRIEL.

Ye holy and humble men of fearful heart,
Be not afraid with these to take your part!
To-night God gives you sight; then be not blind;
Behold with us the high celestial mind!
Ye also with one voice must here rejoice.

1ST SHEPHERD.

We be poor mortals! Here's all Heaven in sight!

GABRIEL.

The Heavens themselves are joined with earth to-night.
Fear not, but rise! Mercy and Truth are met;
And Righteousness on Peace her seal hath set.
Stand and be strong,
Ye, too, shall share our song!

SEMI-CHORUS.

Glory to God ; on earth, peace, goodwill !
He smites with His rod, and the waters are still ;
He maketh it bud for the evil and good,
He lifts the low valley and bends the high hill.

SEMI-CHORUS.

Thou Christ art the Rod, and Thy reign shall be peace !
At the power of Thy nod, all warfare shall cease.
The desert shall blossom and be as the rose,
When the Healing of nations from Bethlehem flows.

CHORUS.

Glory to God In the Highest !
Who unto man Now comes nighest.
Peace be to earth ! Goodwill to all !
Christ the new Birth Redeems man's fall.

[*The* ANGELS *disappear*.

4TH SHEPHERD.

Sir, have we dreamed this?

GABRIEL.

Let your own hearts tell !
Do dreams bequeath such joy ? Your bosoms swell,

Your faces glow, your eyes are full of cheer.
Why are they so? Lately you had great fear,
And stood as huddled flocks before a storm;
Have dreams, then, made you warm?

4TH SHEPHERD.

Oh, Sir, 'tis true!
Yet scarcely do I know what next to do.

2ND SHEPHERD.

You come wi' me, lad! come along o' me,
We'll all be off to Bethlehem, and see
What they be doing there! Lord, Lord, I doubt
Whether I'll know to find me way about
With such high things a-happening!
Sir, you see
There ain't much show about the likes o' we,
But what I say's—if this be true—well, well,
'Tis the best news that ever I heard tell!

1ST SHEPHERD.

And the best fortune any on us has had!
Lord, though, but don't it make an old heart glad!
Christ born? You say it is so, Sir? So be it!
Thank God as we should be alive to see it!

ABEL.

Be He at Bethlehem?

GABRIEL.

Aye, there go ye!
While ye so fare, your folds shall guarded be;
Round them even now stand those ye do not see.
Go ye in peace!

SHEPHERDS.

We thank you kindly, Sir.

SHEPHERDS (*sing*).

Now we will go, now we will go,
The way we know to Bethlehem;
That they may show, and we may know,
'Tis even so as you proclaim.

And we will take the bread we bake,
The wine we make, as gifts to them;
And milk and cheese; and on our knees
Will offer these at Bethlehem.

And He shall know we love Him so,
But cannot show a better way
Of service dear, and loving cheer,
Than we do here on Christmas Day.

[*Exeunt several of the* SHEPHERDS.

6TH SHEPHERD.

Sir, do you think that I might make so bold
As offer Him a young lamb from the fold?
'Twas the first dropped this lambing time; maybe
He'll take it kindly from the likes o' we,
We being simple shepherds.

GABRIEL.

Simple? Yes!
Would God, all minds had this same simpleness!
Take Him what gifts ye will! To-night on earth
All's peace to greet Christ's birth.

5TH SHEPHERD.

Noticed you that?
He made the shepherd's sign: 'a did it pat!

SHEPHERDS (*without*).

Come on, lads, come!

6TH SHEPHERD.

Good-night, Sir.

GABRIEL.

Peace befall
You and your ways! Good-night, friend; good-night, all. [*Exeunt* SHEPHERDS.

SHEPHERDS (*in the distance singing*).

And we will go, and we will go,
The way we know to Bethlehem ;
That Love may show, and we may know,
'Tis even so as you proclaim.

Enter the ANGEL OF THE STAR. *He crosses the stage and departs.*

Enter the KINGS.

1ST KING.

Hear me, O King of Kings,
And give me my desire!

2ND KING.

Hive me beneath Thy wings,
And guide my feet with fire!

3RD KING.

Unto that Holy Mount,
Where forth from Thee goes Light.

ALL.

Whence springs a Living Fount
To wash the whole world white.

GABRIEL.

Peace be with you, and hail!
Where go ye this fair night,
Travellers, and what seek ye?

1ST KING.

We seek from the hill the vale,
And from the vale the hill.

2ND KING.

From the ends of the morning, rest;
And from the East the West.

3RD KING.

In the darkness we seek fire,
And out of dreams the heart's desire!
And, if to-day we fail,
To-morrow we seek it still.

GABRIEL.

Are ye not weary, seeking so?
Are ye not laden with care?

1ST KING.

We are not weary. If our feet be slow,
'Tis with the burden of the Love we bear.
It is our longing for the Light we seek
Which makes us weak.

GABRIEL.

What is the longing of each one?

3RD KING.

Melchior, wilt thou first speak?

2ND KING.

Too slow my footsteps move
For the goal I seek to prove.
My body is a waste,
Through which my soul doth haste,
Famished until it taste
Its nameless new desire!
A flame my spirit owns,
Ashes are all my bones,
Love lights in me such fire!
I thirst! my throat is dried!
I ask;—am still denied!
Cry to be satisfied:
Yet only as Love will.
Now, if He come not first,
Not death, but ease were worst;—
Let me die, thirsting still!

GABRIEL.

And you?

3RD KING.

I have such Love!
Beauty, I know not of,
Hath laid on me the vision of its Light.
When that Light shines, earth's ends
Therein shall all be friends:
They shall not hurt nor kill, but on the height
Named Holy shall be peace.
Then shall all warfare cease,
And every king his crown
Shall at the cradle of a new-born Babe lay down.

GABRIEL.

And thou, that standest last,
Say what desire thou hast?

1ST KING.

For Earth's waiting to be done;
For God to send forth His Son,
Godhead and man made one!
That creation, wrought afresh,
May be finished and made whole;
That the Word may become Flesh,
And Earth receive her soul!
Pray we for this,
Seeing well how good it is.

GABRIEL.

Behold, this night shall bring you to your bliss.

3RD KING.

Whence comes thy knowledge to make hope so near?

GABRIEL.

Oh, let your ears be opened till they hear!
Open your eyes, and mark with fearless sight
The throng of thanksgiving which fills this night:
Nor walks on heaven alone, but earth as well!
Sound in sweet tone, celestial Choirs, and tell!

ANGELS (*appearing*).

Glory to God In the Highest!
Who unto man Now comes nighest.
Peace be to earth! Goodwill to all!
Christ the new Birth Redeems man's fall.

1ST KING.

Oh, ye blest sounds, be as the air we breathe!

2ND KING.

Oh, fair things seen, your light to us bequeath!

3RD KING.

And if there be an ending to our quest,
Show, now, where lies our rest!

GABRIEL.

O Kings, your quest is ended now, earth joins
To greet her Lord, in Heaven's exultant strains.
Righteousness is the girdle of His loins,
And faithfulness the girdle of His reins.
The Spirit of God shall rest on Him, of might,
Of wisdom, and of counsel, and of fear:
He shall not judge according unto sight,
Neither reprove by the hearing of His ear:
But by His righteousness shall He do right,
And with His equity the meek repay;
Out of His mouth a rod the earth shall smite,
And by His breath the wicked He shall slay.
The wolf shall make his dwelling in the fold,
The leopard and the kid together play,
The young lion with the fatling: and behold
A Little Child shall lead them in the way!
Then like the ox the lion shall eat straw,
The calf and the young bear be in one pen;
The suckling from his hole the asp shall draw,
And the weaned child play by the adder's den.

They shall not hurt in all my Holy Hill,
Nor shall there any more destruction be :
The knowledge of the Lord the earth shall fill,
Even as the water covereth the sea.
And He shall raise His people from their sin.
This is the way of Life : walk ye therein !

1ST KING.

Where shall we find Him ? where throw off our load?

GABRIEL.

In Bethlehem Peace makes His fair abode.
Yonder His star still lights you to your road.

[*Exeunt the* KINGS.

ACT II.

The inn-stable at Bethlehem. Without, voices are heard singing.

'Noel, Noel, Noel,'
Sang the church bell;
'God's in His Heaven,
This know well!'

Noel, Noel, Noel,
Ding-dong-bell,
God from High Heaven
Comes on earth to dwell.

'Noel, Noel, Noel,'
Bells ring on earth,
'Come and know well
This bright Birth!'

JOSEPH.

Sleepest thou, Mary?

MARY.

I sleep not ; I pray.
Behold, on me my Lord His Head doth lay.
Look how in sleep He takes a mortal's rest :
See where His Hand is laid upon my breast !

JOSEPH.

Mary, I dread to see !

MARY.

Nay, come more near ;
But wake Him not !

JOSEPH.

Alas ! I have such fear.

MARY.

I, too : my soul is glad through very dread
While in this chamber God doth make His bed :
For now our eyes behold the glorious Birth
Which shall uplift again low-fallen earth.
Here, where He rests, amid these hollowed rocks,
I hear the world's heart move in joyful shocks,—
The pulsing of her rivers and her springs :
I feel the air beat with the throb of wings :
And farther up, amid the heavenly maze,
The stars and planets with adoring gaze

Look down and say, 'O maid with favour stored,
How com'st thou to be Mother of our Lord?'
What can I answer, I? Let Gabriel
Speak to those heavenly questioners, and tell
How by the Holy Ghost this came to be;
How power from the Highest o'ershadowed me,
Till in my heart God came Himself to lie,
Perfect fulfilment of all prophecy.
Naught may I know save this: His handmaid I.

VOICES.

'Ave Maria, gratia plena, Dominus tecum! Benedicta tu in mulieribus, et Benedictus Fructus ventris tui, Jesus.'

[*A knocking is heard.*

JOSEPH.

Who knocks?

SHEPHERD (*without*).

A friend: we be all friendly men:
We be the shepherds.

JOSEPH.

Come in, shepherds, then:
Here's welcome waiting you! Behold and bless
The Peace within your gates, the Plenteousness!

The SHEPHERDS *enter.*

1ST SHEPHERD.

Mother of God, welcome to Bethlehem!

MARY.

Shepherds of Israel, welcome to Christ's Birth!

OMNES.

Hail Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with thee! Blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus. Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners now, and in the hour of our death. Amen.

MARY.

Behold the handmaid of the Lord!
So as His Word hath His Way been;
Now Earth to Heaven doth room afford;
The Godhead veiled in Flesh is seen.
  Come and adore, in form of man,
  The Word that was ere worlds began!

OMNES.

Mother Mary, hail!
  And of thy Grace,
Lift away the veil
  That hides God's face!

Here God lies
  For a short space.
Mary, Mother wise,
  Show us God's face!

Mary, all the lands,
  Mary, all the seas,
Gather in thy hands
  To thy dear knees!

Mary, maiden white,
  Mother, pure within,
Show to mortal sight
  Love that cures sin!

1ST SHEPHERD.

Mother Mary, may we see God?

MARY.

Stand near in faith, behold,
  Be comforted by Him!
Here, shepherds, is your fold.

ABEL.

Lady, I cannot see : mine eyes are dim.

MARY.

Come near, in faith : come near !
  Thou shalt win sight.
Doubt not : have thou no fear !

ABEL.

Lady, mine eyes be healed and full of light !

MARY.

Even so, even so,
Let Earth perceive and know !

1ST SHEPHERD.

Son of God, shine on us !

2ND SHEPHERD.

Lamb of God, look on us !

3RD SHEPHERD.

Shepherd of men, set Thy sign on us !

4TH SHEPHERD.

And lay Thy yoke on us !

5TH SHEPHERD.

And we will be thankful.

1ST SHEPHERD (*kneeling*).

Queen, Mother, pardon me who make so bold
To speak! but hearts grown full be hard to hold
To-night, as Heaven hath willed, have come thy
way
Poor folk with meagre speech yet much to say.
So, if word lack, let thine own wisdom fill:
And—give me countenance!—I'll not speak ill.
Dear Mother, pray for us! Foolish we be,
Untaught and rude: but what we see we see,
And what we hear we hear; to what's above
Our heads we bow: and what we love we love!
And, loving thee since our first entrance in,
Do thereby more love God, and more hate sin;
And of all lips would have thy lips to pray
Pardon for us and peace to seek His way.
Fair Mother, we have old men here among,
As thou may'st see; and thou, we see, art young:
Yet the name 'Mother' runneth to the tongue
That seeks a name for thee. May we not all
Thee as our Lady and our Mother call,
For thy Son's sake?

MARY.

Amen. So, shepherds, do!
Call as Love bids you, and I'll answer you.

1ST SHEPHERD.

Mother, I have laid bread here at thy feet.
For thy Son's sake, I pray thee take and eat!

2ND SHEPHERD.

Mother, I bring thee milk.

3RD SHEPHERD.

I bring thee cheese.

4TH SHEPHERD.

I have brought nuts. Strengthen His teeth on these,
When they begin to pair.

5TH SHEPHERD.

Also here's wine,
Good for a festal, or when frost bites fine.
Also my cloak is thine.

6TH SHEPHERD.

Dear Mother, for God's sake,
Wilt thou, I prithee, take
This firstling from the fold?

It is so beautiful,
And thereto hath warm wool
  To ward one from the cold.
Take it, then, to thy lap
  Beside thy Son :
It may keep warm, mayhap,
  The Blessed One.

MARY.

It shall keep warm my heart, shepherd, to thee.

7TH SHEPHERD.

Mother, my empty hands do me a wrong :
No gift have I, but in my lips a song
  Such as we shepherds sing.

MARY.

Such songs are best.
To-night your lips shall lull the Shepherd's King
  To rest.

7TH SHEPHERD (*sings*).

The world is old to-night,
  The world is old ;
The stars around the fold
  Do show their light.

And so they did, and so,
A thousand years ago,
And so will do, dear Love, when you lie cold.
(*Speaks.*) Nay, nay, but I can sing no more thereof;
I had forgot the sadness of the end!

MARY.

Thou hast but prophesied how men shall scoff
Even at Love, my friend.

[*Knocking is heard.*

JOSEPH.

Ho, there without! Who knocks? Come ye in peace?

KINGS (*without*).

Kings, seeking it, we come!

JOSEPH.

Here enter, and find ease!

THE KINGS *enter.*

1ST KING.

Blessed be God!

OMNES.

Blessed be God!

2ND KING.

Blessed be His Holy Name!

OMNES.

Blessed be His Holy Name!

3RD KING.

Blessed be Jesus Christ, true God and true Man!

OMNES.

Blessed be Jesus Christ, true God and true Man!

1ST KING.

Oh, finished quest!
Oh, rest!

2ND KING.

Oh, Fount, that first
Of all hath satisfied my thirst!

3RD KING.

Oh, Light,
That brings me sight!

1ST KING

Thou Birth Divine,
Behold,
The earthly sign
Of power and kingship, gold,
Here in my hands I hold,
And offer, to be Thine.

2ND KING.

This frankincense
Let be
A symbol, whence
All men may learn to see
How veiled a mystery
Defeats man's sense where Godhead deigns to be

3RD KING.

Oh, Comforter of souls,
I bring Thee myrrh.
When grief my heart controls
And darkness round me rolls,
Sweet Saviour, be Thou near!

THE THREE KINGS.

Thanksgiving, Praise, and Prayer,
Three offerings meet,
We lay in equal share
Before Christ's feet.

MARY.

Your welcome gifts,
Proffered in love, from Earth to Heaven He lifts.

THE KINGS

Now see we Love on Earth His throne!
All we have known,
Or hoped to gain,
Was this alone—
That He might reign!

OMNES.

That He might reign!
Oh, welcome Birth! let all adore
The Christ made Man for evermore.

THE SHEPHERDS.

'Tis Christmas morn:
Come ye, and bow the knee!
Lo, here we see
The perfect Man is born.

CHORUS

(*in alternate parts*, KINGS *and* SHEPHERDS).

For this fair Birth
(Which now we see!)
Shows forth God's worth,
(Then sing we merrily!)
And makes glad earth,
And brings man mirth,
(So sing we merrily this fair Birth!)

THE KINGS.

'Tis Christmas Day:
Oh pray,—put off your sins!
This day begins
For man the perfect way.

CHORUS (*as before*).

For this fair Birth, etc.

[*During this song the Attendants of the* KINGS *have entered.*

OMNES.

Mother Mary, give us thy Son's Blessing!

(*They sing.*) Mary, Gate of Day,
Lend thine intercession!
Holy Mother May,
Pray for my transgression!

Ere He yet touched Earth,
He did first touch thee;
Through thy perfect worth
God reached down for me.

MARY.

The word expressed
In Flesh hath come ;
Against my breast
The Voice lies dumb,
That shall be of all prophecies the sum.

Oh, Thou dread Voice
Of Heaven's decree,
Who madest choice
To dwell with me,
Now through my lips, this once, let utterance be !

My Peace I leave,
My Peace I give :
All that receive
The same shall live ;
And tribute hearts win joy retributive.

The Cup I bless,
The Bread I break,
Is Righteousness !
Draw near and take !
Eat, drink, and hold remembrance for Love's sake !

The peace of Peace,
Outpassing sense,
Give your mind's ease
When ye go hence.
Love, peace, and pardon be your recompense!

OMNES.

Hail, Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with thee! Blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus. Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners now, and in the hour of our death. Amen.

MARY.

Kings from far countries have ye come to see
A King Whose reign shall make all kingdoms free.
Low at His feet your crowns ye cast to ground;
From this day forward ye shall go more crowned;
For, named hereafter, ye shall be named wise,
Seeing that in Heaven ye watched Christ's star arise.
Great kings ye came, but much more great ye go,
Who to His state have bowed yourselves so low.
And you, dear Shepherds, to your settled folds
Return, and father your sweet flocks to rest!
Though Heavenly signs depart, Heaven's purpose holds,

Where Earth's Redemption slumbers at my breast.
Look where He lies! Kiss ye His feet, and go!
Your Shepherd He: Whose sheep are ye, I know.

When mothers teach to babes their mother-tongue,
This tale shall first be told:
How to His birth ye came in days of old,
While starlight led and seraph-voices sung.
So, in that story, shall your names stay young.
Farewell; give thanks for this! Ye to Christ's fold
Are come. Take all the bliss that hearts on earth may hold!

[*Exeunt* KINGS, SHEPHERDS, *and* ATTENDANTS.

SHEPHERDS AND KINGS (*without*).

I heard on Christmas night
The loud bells ringing:
'New Life and Light
Christ comes bringing!'

Chorus.

Oh, that is true, is true,
And better could not be!
So God bless you!
And God bless me!

I heard on Christmas night
The glad news pealing :
'Christ to human sight
Now gives healing!'

Oh, that is true, is true,
And better could not be!
So God bless you!
And God bless me!

I heard on Christmas night
The high Heavens telling :
'Christ who left His height,
On earth finds dwelling!'

Oh, that is true, is true,
And better could not be!
So God bless you!
And God bless me!

From Mary, Queen of Might,
Comes down sweet saying :
'I hear, on Christmas night,
All poor hearts praying!'

Oh, that is true, is true,
And better could not be!
So God bless you!
And God bless me!

Enter GABRIEL.

GABRIEL.

Servant of God, sleep not, awake!
  Saddle the ass ere dawn of day;
The Mother, and the young Child take,
  Whom Herod seeketh now to slay;
Get thee hence ere the wakening bird
  Hath sung; to Egypt win thy way:
There, till I come and bring thee word,
  Shalt thou in hiding stay.
As thou hast heard, make haste, obey!

[*Exit.*

JOSEPH.

Mary, arise; hence must we go,
  Even before the dawn of day.

MARY.

It is God's will?

JOSEPH.

'Tis even so:
His angel's word.

MARY.

Which we obey.

[*Exeunt.*

VOICES OF CAROL-SINGERS (*without*).

God rest you, merry gentlemen,
Let nothing you dismay!
Because that Jesus Christ our Lord
Is born on Christmas Day!

[CURTAIN.]

Enter CHORUS.

Chorus. Oh Maid and Holy Child, where have
ye gone?
Lost are the voices, sets the Star that shone:
Back to their folds have gone the shepherd-band:
Each king is now returned to his own land.
Love is gone forth into the world to win
Saints to their rest, and sinners back from sin.
Gentles, O ye that here have watched our play,
Tell me, I pray you, did He pass *your* way?
Say have ye Him safe, each one, in his breast?
Oh, hold Him well! So shall we all have rest.
The grace of Jesus Christ, who is our Lord,
The Love of God, the Holy Ghost's accord,
Be with us all! And Heaven be our reward!
Amen.

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